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### Review of First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and Their Present-day Descendants

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## Review of First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and Their Present-day Descendants

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This is definitely not a children's book. In its genre-straddling way it is closest to a "warts and all" memoir with a few travel writing overtones. For public and academic library adult nonfiction collections or self-loathing Southerners and those who enjoy a spot of Southern culture bashing.

*Harriet Alexander and Ross Johnson*  
*University of Memphis*

***First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and Their Present-Day Descendants.*** Nashville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 2000. 479 pp.

More than just a list of ancestors and descendants, this notable reference includes a foreword by Wilma Dykeman, a preface by Lamar Alexander, an introduction by Chere Bolin Henderson the Associate Director of the East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS) & First Families of Tennessee (FFT) Project Director, acknowledgements by Kent Whitworth Director of the ETHS, and an essay "Paths of Migration" written by Wayne C. Moore, deputy assistant state archivist. Moore's essay is particularly valuable for both content and analysis as well as for several maps illustrating roads and trails, portraits of frontiersmen, drawings & photographs of homesteads, and George Caleb Bingham's classic painting of Daniel Boone leading immigrants through the Cumberland Gap. Women, the Cherokee, African-Americans, Religion & Education and Movement to Statehood are treated as sidebar topics within his essay.

Inclusion in the book required applicants to submit proof of descent linking each generation and specifically documenting the ancestor's residence in Tennessee by 1796. An essential reference for all Tennessee libraries having genealogy and family history collections, the two indexes; one to spouses, the other to descendants, make locating individuals fairly simple. Although the index to descendants provides names only, the ETHS will forward letters to individuals if the letter includes a stamped envelope, thus facilitating the exchange of family information to those with shared kinship. Arranged alphabetically by surname, each entry gives basic vital information including date and place of birth, county settled, date and place of death, and proof of early settlement. Proof ranges from the Draper Manuscripts and Ramsey's *Annals of Tennessee* to public records including land grants, court minutes, tax lists, and census records and then to private records such as Bible records, letters, and biographies. Almost a dozen entries are listed as pending although

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they were initially approved, because they lack definite proof of residence prior to 1796. Additionally, the publication provides blank lined pages at the end for personal and family record notations.

*Rebecca Tolley-Stokes*  
*Sherrod Library*  
*East Tennessee State University*

Fulton, Patty Smithdeal. ***Let the Record Show: the True Story of Hack Smithdeal and Johnson City's Trial of the Century***. Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2001. 176 pp.

*Let the Record Show* combines an account of one of the most notorious murder trials in Johnson City, with a biography of the defendant, Hack Smithdeal. In 1962, Smithdeal was arrested and tried for the shooting death of Roy Faircloth. The major issue of the trial was not whether Smithdeal had committed the shooting, a fact that he never denied, but whether it was premeditated murder or self-defense. The author, Smithdeal's daughter, gives an insider's view of the case, which had a profound effect on her family and the community.

A large portion of the book is devoted to the life of Hack Smithdeal, who was a prominent person in Johnson City and the surrounding area from the 1930's into the 1960's. He was well known as a businessman, and for his involvement in local and state politics. This account also gives a vivid picture of life in East Tennessee and western North Carolina (where Smithdeal grew up) during the early part of the twentieth century. An interesting feature of this account is that, unlike many "true crime" stories, it does not end with the trial. The author continues by recounting selected events that vividly depict the effect the trial and its aftermath had on her father and her family.

While the author is Hack Smithdeal's daughter, and therefore personally involved in the story, she is also a journalist. The book is deliberately focused on her father, and is designed to tell his side of the story, which he apparently never did himself. However, she does a good job of keeping the account unbiased, focusing on facts and events. She uses reliable sources as the basis for her work, such as interviews with participants in the events described (including the judge who presided over the trial), newspaper articles, court transcripts, the defense lawyers' pre-trial notes, and her father's personal papers, in addition to her own recollections. Her sources are cited in the bibliography.